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RESEARCH IN COHESIVE AND DISRUPTIVE TENDENCIES
IN COALITION-TYPE GROUPS

Technical Report Number 4

ORGANIZATIONAL INVOLVEMENT AS REFLECTED IN TYPE OF MEMBER
COMPLAINT: AN INDIRECT METHOD OF MEASUREMENT

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...concept referring to the degree to which a member is involved in his organization seems likely to be useful to social psychology. Included among the phenomena referred to by the concept are concern for the welfare of the group, evaluating relevant events in terms of their actual or potential effect upon the group and registering positive or negative affect as a consequence of the group's successes or failures.

This concept which we shall term, "organizational involvement" (OI), is related, in part, to the concept of cohesiveness (2), but the two are clearly not identical and they serve different purposes. Cohesiveness refers to the attractiveness of the group--how strong a hold the group has on its members regardless of the type or source of attraction. But cohesiveness and OI bear no one-to-one correspondence. A person's original and present attraction to a group may stem from sources other than those related to the achievement of group goals; for example, a person may be more interested in deriving social satisfactions from his membership. True, the power of the group to influence its members toward being concerned about the group's goals is supposed to be proportional to their attraction to the group. But, the actual exertion of this power depends upon other circumstances such as a crises situation with regard to, say, the continuation of the group or upon the spur of achieving an important group objective. If power were maximally exerted upon all the members toward being concerned with the organization then OI would be proportional to the member's attraction. OI may be regarded as one component of cohesiveness but it should be reflected in different ways from other components.

Some of the conditions which produce individual differences in OI are probably quite independent of its relation to cohesiveness. Assuming a responsible position in the organization may cause a member to develop interest in the organization's goals, i.e., his role in the group may determine his orientation. Certain predispositional differences may also be responsible for differences in OI among the members.

The present study and method of measuring OI is based upon a finding from a previous study (3) in which comparisons were made between active and passive members of organizations. One type of comparison centered about the complaints they had about their groups. It was found that the active member's complaints referred more frequently to obstacles preventing satisfactory group functioning while the complaints of the passive members referred more often to the group's interference with their extra-group life, or were of a personal nature.

1. This research was carried out under contract with the Office of Naval Research as one project under Contract N8 onr-66216. It is also a part of a program of research on the social psychology of student groups carried out by the Office of the Dean of Students, University of Minnesota.

From this finding the hypothesis may be formulated that the type of organizational complaint of a member is related to his involvement in or orientation toward his group. If OI is high then sensitivity to those obstacles which interfere with group locomotion will be high; if OI is low, such sensitivity should be low. This relationship presupposes, of course, that such obstacles do exist.

This explanation, however, does not in itself account for the higher frequency of complaints among the passive members concerning the interference of the group with their extra-group life. It is probable, however, that when organizational demands are made upon a member low in OI he will experience those as impositions. The same demands made of a member high in OI will be perceived as just and necessary since he is already motivated to work for the group.

If these findings could be verified they could be utilized for the dual purpose of adding information about the concept of OI and developing an instrument to measure OI which would possess the virtue of an indirect measure (1). The present study is therefore directed toward these purposes.

METHOD

We will assume that the officers of an organization are by and large more involved in the organization's affairs than are the non-officers. The role of officer is by definition one which requires the occupant to concern himself with the group's goals. The validity of the present instrument was therefore checked by administering it to the total membership of a number of similar organizations and comparing the responses to it of officers with non-officers.

In connection with a larger study (4), 26 of 32 social fraternities at the University of Minnesota were given a questionnaire during their business meetings. The six groups not included either did not cooperate or did not live together as a fraternal group. One of the 26 fraternities was so small in membership that it consisted entirely of officers and in another all but one were officers so that these groups were not used. The N therefore is 24. The median percent return was 86; the interquartile range from 82 to 98; the range from 47 to 100. The median number of officers in our sample is 12; the range is from six to 24. The median number of non-officers is 15; the range is from three to 35.

The OI scale consists of 10 items some of which are taken practically verbatim from the responses given by the sorority members in the previous study (3) to the question, "What do you like least about your sorority?" Others were added by changing the meanings slightly.

Figure 1 presents the instructions and the item.

Figure 1

Instructions and Items of OI Test

Few groups are absolutely perfect and several of the most common group deficiencies are listed below. Would you check at least three of these but not more than five, which apply most closely to your fraternity?

1. There is too much apathy among some members. (G)
 2. Many fraternity activities take too much time. (P)
 3. Some members put their own interests ahead of the fraternity. (G)
 4. There are too many compulsory activities. (P)
 5. Some members who should do not participate sufficiently in rushing. (G)
 6. There is not enough consideration of individual feelings and desires. (P)
 7. Some members see the fraternity only as a place to live. (G)
 8. The fraternity is too expensive. (P)
 9. Some members take the fraternity too much for granted. (G)
 10. Some members do not take sufficient responsibility. (G)
-

The six items designed to reflect OI when checked are labeled "G"; the four items supposed to reflect low OI when checked are labeled "P". It will be noticed that the phrase "some members" is always included in a G type complaint. The purpose of "some" is to encourage a person who is generally satisfied with the group's participation and who is himself involved to check such items. Without the "some" the threshold for checking some items might be so high as to result in little variability of scores among the members.

The reasons for requiring the subjects to check at least three items was to insure that all subjects could be given a score. The reason for permitting no more than five items to be checked was to rule out the possibility that items relatively unimportant to the subject would be checked.

In analyzing the data the mean number of G items checked by the non-officers in a given fraternity was subtracted from the mean of the officers' responses in that fraternity. The mean of the differences for the 24 fraternities was then tested by the t test. The same process applies to the P items. The index used was G-P and these differences were also tested by the t test. The intended effect of subtracting P from G was to partial out a general tendency to complain if such did exist and to add to the reliability of the scale.

RESULTS

Table 1 shows that the results are as anticipated. Officers compared with non-officers make more G responses, fewer P responses and the index, G-P, is larger. However, the difference in P responses is significant only between the 5 and 10% levels of confidence. The subtraction of P from G results in a larger absolute difference between the two groups but increases the variability among fraternities so that the resulting \bar{t} is no larger than that obtained using only G.

Table 1

Means and Differences Between Means* of Officers and Non-officers (N=24)

| | G | Means P | G-P |
|-----------------------------|------|------------|------|
| Officers | 2.95 | .50 | 2.45 |
| Non-officers | 2.71 | .61 | 2.10 |
| Officers minus non-officers | .24 | - .12 | .35 |
| t d.f.=23 | 2.45 | -1.80 | 2.47 |
| p | <.05 | <.10>.05 | <.05 |

* The small discrepancies are caused by errors of rounding off.

To present the results in another way, the number of fraternities in which the mean G of officers exceeded the mean of non-officers was 17 out of a possible 24. The number of times the mean of the P responses was larger for non-officers than for officers was 16. The number of times G-P was larger for officers than non-officers was 17. The fraternities in which the results were opposite to the general trend were mostly ones in which the N's were small.

On the basis of the \bar{t} tests the P items apparently do not discriminate between officers and non-officers as well as do the G items. It may be that under some circumstances members with high OI have so many demands made upon them that they would get higher scores on the P items than some members so low in OI that they do not even expose themselves to any demands. Nevertheless,

the data are consistent with the original hypothesis and the measuring instrument appears to have some validity despite the small differences found.²

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

A concept called "organizational involvement" (OI), defined as the degree to which a member is concerned about his organization's objectives and welfare, has been tested for usefulness by hypothesizing that persons who are high in OI compared with those low in OI will tend to be more aware of obstacles which prevent their organizations from functioning satisfactorily. Also, such members will tend to make fewer complaints that the organization makes too many demands upon them or interferes with their extra-group life.

A list of items made up of statements which were complaints about the apathy and lack of group responsibility of "some members" in the organization (G items) was devised as well as a list of items primarily referring to the group as making too many or unwelcome demands upon the person (P items). These items were submitted to the members of 24 fraternities. The officers of the fraternities, assumed to possess high OI, score higher on the G items and lower on the P items than the non-officers who were assumed to have low OI. An index, subtracting the number of P items checked from the number of G items checked, was also used but the improvement it introduces in discriminating between the two groups is doubtful.

This method of measuring OI among members of an organization is proposed as a useful one because of the advantages accruing from indirect measurement. However, only a first step has been taken. The instrument discriminates between groups which should differ in the expected manner on the basis of reasonable assumptions. But before recommending this method as a general measure of OI additional work will be required in relating it either as a correlated variable to other aspects of OI, or as an independent variable to some consequences of OI, or as a dependent variable to conditions other than officership which lead to OI.

2. Two cautions are in order. One, the index has definite drawbacks as a measure of the OI of a group per se. There is suggestive evidence that as a measure for distinguishing OI between groups it also measures real apathy. Two, the particular items probably need to be adapted to different type groups.

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